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RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 0099  
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RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 0055  
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 0057  
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SUBJECT: Santiago Oct. 20 Media Report

Lead Story

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¶1. A protected witness revealed that the five individuals implicated in last week's attack in the Region of Araucania, where a toll booth was destroyed and several trucks were set on fire, were planning to attack trucks transporting gas and oil from Argentina (Conservative, influential El Mercurio, 10/20).

Salitre and other military exercises

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¶2. Chilean Defense Minister Francisco Vidal underscored that the "Salitre" exercise that began yesterday in Antofagasta "is a multilateral cooperation exercise that is being carried out in the best possible conditions" with the participation of Argentina, Brazil, the United States, and France (Government-owned, La Nacion, 10/20).

¶3. Minister Vidal, who will travel to Antofagasta next week for the "Salitre" exercise, commented on Chile's invitation for Peruvian Ambassador Carlos Pareja to observe the exercise: "I would very much like to have him sitting next to me on the airplane," said Vidal (Conservative, independent, La Tercera, 10/20).

¶4. Minister Vidal inaugurated the Chile-Bolivia "Brotherhood" (Hermandad) exercise, which is intended to prepare both armies to work together in an eventual catastrophe. The exercise is held at the Tactical Operations Computer Training Center of the War Academy in La Reina. Minister Vidal said the exercise is an "expression of the level of relations between Chile and Bolivia, especially in the military arena" (La Tercera, 10/20).

¶5. A force of 2,000 soldiers, engineers, and pilots and 42 aircraft began yesterday the "Salitre 2009" exercise in Cerro Moreno in Antofagasta. U.S. Air Force Colonel Bryan Bearden valued the integration of the countries taking part in the exercise (El Mercurio, 10/20).

¶6. The commanders-in-chief of the Chilean and Peruvian armies, General Oscar Izurieta and Otto Guibovick, respectively, met privately yesterday for three hours in Tacna, Peru. Relations between the two countries are at their lowest point due to Peru's bilateral maritime border claim with the Hague, its proposal for South American countries to sign a non-aggression pact -- which Chile considers unnecessary -- and tension over the Salitre exercise in Chile's north. Army sources said that both officers had discussed all issues affecting the bilateral relationship (El Mercurio, 10/20).

#### U.S.-Related News

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¶7. U.S. Ambassador Paul Simons introduced the director of the recently opened Sub Regional Office of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Ana Maria Osorio, to Chilean Health Minister Alvaro Erazo. Simons and Erazo concurred on the importance of sharing expertise with regard to food regulations, labeling, and nutrition (La Nacion, 10/20).

¶8. Chilean Ximena Hartsock was removed from D.C.'s park and recreation office because she is Latino and a woman. Hartsock said that no one had ever before in the United States questioned her race or origin and that perhaps her mistake was to implement rapid and effective changes while in office (El Mercurio, women's magazine "Ya", 10/20).

¶9. Customs figures show that Chilean exports to all destinations fell from January to September, except to China where they increased 6.3%. China is the recipient of 22.9% of Chile's total exports and the United States of 12.5% (La Tercera, 10/20).

#### Local politics

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¶10. Laura Alborno, minister of the Women's National Service, resigned yesterday to join Eduardo Frei's presidential campaign. President Bachelet's mother, Angela Jeria, also joined Frei's team. The most recent poll conducted by Centro de Estudios Publicos shows that Frei has a 29% of support among women voters. This is four points less than Sebastian Pinera (El Mercurio, 10/20).

#### Indigenous Affairs

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¶11. In yesterday's hearing in Victoria, Prosecutor Miguel Angel Velasquez described the 16 attacks that have occurred in the Region of Araucania since 2007. All of these attacks, he said, have involved setting trucks on fire, seizing farm or forestry land, and attacking private citizens on highways and roads. The prosecutor said these have been "duly organized" attacks that are conducted at night intended to "hurt people's integrity and public and private security." The ultimate purpose, he said, is to generate fear. In this context, the prosecutor charged the five individuals who last week attacked a toll booth, fired at private vehicles, and burned several trucks with arson and theft with intimidation. They are all members of local indigenous Mapuche organizations.

Prosecutor Velasquez also revealed that according to the account of a protected witness, the individuals involved in last week's attacks had an M-16. The witness identified the leader of the

group, stating that he had handed out several weapons, including the M-16. According to the account, the group also carried bottles of fuel and a chainsaw to cut trees to block the highway. He said the group had fired on one truck, because the barricade had not stopped him. He said the group knew the number of trucks with fuel tanks expected to transit the highway (El Mercurio, 10/20)

¶12. Under Secretary of Interior Patricio Rosende said that the use of a military weapon such as an M-16 constitutes a serious matter, but added that further evidence must be gathered to corroborate the existence of such a weapon in the recent attacks (La Tercera, 10/20).  
SIMONS